

HOME READING.

The Wife's Vigil.

Count of me but as one
Who sits in the pen of love; that, when he breathes,
Takes his pen and writes, as he dictates, write—Dante.

I.
What is my dearest thought of thee?
To have no words to say.
To have no words to say.
To have no words to say.
To have no words to say.
To have no words to say.
To have no words to say.
To have no words to say.

II.
And I, because thy will is one with His
In whom alone our joy hath perfect grace,
My heart wish for thee the old one is,
Thine own wish our joy is in every place."

III.
What is our else bringing
To solve her childish woes
Over her obstinate love?
The comfort is a rose!

She sighs as she turns the pages,
She knits her brows in vain;
Then smiles at the crimson blossom,
And bends to her task again.

And I, an older scholar,
Whose lessons are hard to learn,
Who find it a pain to be patient
Till my holiday return—

O soul of my soul! I carry
That calm from the gardens above
That calms my life in its fragrance:
The red, red rose of our love!

IV.
Full many a shape the protean cup taketh
Before my grateful eyes: a flower, a gem,
A song, a light, a sovereign balm;
And each an image of the whole he maketh,
As of a part, when fevered longing slaketh
The thirst in memory's wine, behold, I see
Thy Cupid in the likeness of a key,
And all my soul to fuller life awaketh,
O key of keys, O love! thy power unlocketh
The deep experience of these hearts around me,
Thou, rich treasures of spirit-history;
Thou, guarded gates of art it mocketh;
Thou, heaven's essential life at last hath crowned me,
Who near this talisman to open its mystery.

V.
I dreamed, beloved, thou wast lying
In some dim chamber far from day,
Where strangers whispered, "He is dying!"
And none could point me out the way.

I woke, beloved; all the morrow
Was calm with unforeseen delight;
For that with ecstasy of sorrow
Thy soul had touched me in the night.

VI.
O come, my only one!
My soul is sick of all these childish plays
Where with I strive to pass the slow, slow days
The trivial rhyme, the fancy's quaint conceits,
The insubstantial dream that lures to cheat—
O strike them dead beneath thy coming feet!
Come, come, come, come!

O come, my only one—
A agony of patience all the year
I have waited, struggling not to wish thee here
I have waited, struggling not to wish thee here

My vision fades, I scarce can look to Him;
To light and leader, from the world's far rim,
Come, come, come, come!

O come, my only one!
My heart is sick of all these childish plays
Where with I strive to pass the slow, slow days
The trivial rhyme, the fancy's quaint conceits,
The insubstantial dream that lures to cheat—
O strike them dead beneath thy coming feet!
Come, come, come, come!

VII.
Sleep throughout in summer sunshine bends
The blessed golden-rod,
As I follow the pathway leading to the quiet house
Of God;
In my brain the old refrain, "Ah, would my dearest
With me trod!"

Then I picture thee as passing through some far-
off, thirsty place,
Where the weary men and women from thy
clearer face find grace;
And I think, "The fruitless drink the benediction
Of his face."

What am I that I should call thee from thy
happiness-appointed way?
Whose glory is to help thee bear the burden of
the day?
Not for me alone, my own, one fragment of thy
blessing, "Say!"

Say! the universe has errands for her wise and
faithful son,
Come not, though I die with longing, till the perfect
work be done,
Thine to loose thee is to choose thee, for our souls
are closer one!

VIII.
"O, why are thine eyes so joyful
And why is thy laugh so gay?"
The kind of my eyes and my laughter
Set sail for his realm to-day!

Hast thou a magical mirror
Wherein to behold him depart?
Thy face, thy radiant face,
Of love that I wear on my heart!

IX.
Homeward at last, at last, my soul's lover,
Cometh the ship; me, you know you
Homeward at last, at last, my soul's lover,
Cometh the ship; me, you know you
Shines through the days of shadow and longing,
Shines through the days of patience and pain,
Of darkness and longing,
Of struggle and pain,
Lo, how all praises to greet thee are thronging,
Leaping, exultant! My love comes again!
Yes, my heart's master,
Faster and faster,
On the lightning bright sails increase,
Song dies away in the fullness of peace.
—MARION L. PELTON in the Christian Union.

The Ship's Doctor.

BY MRS. OLIPHANT.

Concluded.

"Nora—Nora, don't speak like that!"
cried the young man. "I'm not worth it,
but you must take me to the world to me. What
do I care for my degree or anything else
but for you? Say you'll take a poor fellow,
Nora? You know you are all the world to
me."

"Indeed, I know nothing of the kind,"
said Nora. "I am very sleepy, and I don't
care much about your degree. Must take
you, indeed! I never do anything that I
must do. What with your toasts, and their
talk, and their nonsense, they've turned
your head. Good night."

And she went away from him, while he
stood and looked after her, stupefied.
"Nora!" he said, in a voice of such pain
that Mrs. Sinclair heard, and left the "things"
on the table. She came in while Nora
stood still, haughty and offended, at the
door. The mother was at once what was
the matter. She thought it was a lover's
quarrel, and she saw there had been enough
of it for the night.

"I thought you had gone with the Lind-
says, Willy," she said, looking at him in her
motherly way, "and you must be wearied,

and fit for your bed. What's Nora mak-
ing her little move at now? But never mind
her; my mind to-morrow's a new day."
Yes, to-morrow's a new day," cried
Willy. "I'll take up my thought of what I've
heard to-night. To-morrow I'm coming
back."

And with that he rushed away. As for
Nora, she flew up stairs, and went to bed,
that she might not come in for that little
sermon which was on her mother's lips.
When she had shut herself into her own
room she had a good cry. She could not
have told any one the reason of her per-
versity. She was angry with herself and
Willy, and the ghosts who had put such
nonsense in his head, and all the world.
Must take him; very likely! If she, Nora
Sinclair, ever had anything to say to a man
who came to her with such a plea! She
paused on the verge of a petulant vow.
Perhaps, on the whole, it would be as well
not to make any oath on the subject. And
happily, at that moment she fell asleep,
which was the easiest way out of the dilem-
ma. To-morrow would be, as Mrs. Sinclair
said, a new day.

But, unfortunately, to-morrow is not
always a new day. When Nora got up in
the chilly spring morning she was on the
whole, rather more irritated and petulant
than she had been the evening before. As
for Mrs. Sinclair, it was her fixed opinion
that the young folk should be left to them-
selves to make up their little matters.
"They know each other's ways best," she
said; "older folk do more harm that good
when they interfere." So when Willy came
in pale and breathless, the kind woman with-
drew herself, that the two might get it over
undisturbed. It was not a new day for
young Erskine any more than it was for
Nora. It was a feverish supplement to
last night. He had not perhaps gone to
bed calmly after all his excitement as a girl
has to do. There was a rare-supper some-
where to which his friends had dragged him,
and where probably Willy's brain had been
heated by strong drink. The morning found
him parched with mental impatience and
suspense, as well as with a certain degree of
bodily feverishness and misery. It seemed
to his heated eyes as if Nora meant to jilt
him after all his devotion. He swore a big
oath to himself as he rushed along to Heriot
Row. "If she'll not take me now, after
all," said Willy, by— "I'll go off to sea,
and I'll never be heard of more." In this
mutual mood the two met. It was not an
amiable interview on either side. The
young lover took up precisely the line of
argument which was most prejudicial to him.
He pleaded his faithful service, his devo-
tion, which had lasted for years. He estab-
lished a claim upon Nora, which she was
not the girl to put up with. And she, on
her side, scornfully denied any claim he had
upon her. "If that is what you call love,"
said the indignant maiden, "to follow a girl
about, whether she likes or not, and then
tell her she must take you to pay you for
it!" This, alas! was not the way of
settling their affairs.

"Nora," cried the young man, desperate,
"this is the moment that's to settle my life.
It's little matter for you, but for me it's life
or death. I'm not asking you to take me
now—say a year, say even two years, I'll
be content; but I have to know—Nora,
bide a moment; if you turn me away with
any hope—by—! There's the *Pretty Peggy*
sails from Anster on Saturday. I'll
go to Greenland in her, and never see you
more."

"And why should I want to see you
more?" said Nora. "What do I care for
your *Pretty Peggy*? It will do you a great
deal of good, Mr. Erskine. It will teach
you, that you can't have everything your
own way."

"Is this your last word, Nora? cried the
poor fellow with glistering eyes. If she
had looked him in the face, Nora's heart
would have given way. But she felt her
weakness, and would not look him in the
face. She stood by the table, turning over
and over in her hand an Indian toy of
carved ivory, with her eyes fixed upon it,
as if it were the intricacies of the pattern
that involved life and death, and then she
said slowly, while the blood seemed to ebb
away from her heart, "I have nothing more
to say."

In another moment the door shut violent-
ly, and Willy Erskine was gone. The sound
went through the house like a thunder-clap,
and threw down with its violent concussion
the castle of cards in which Nora had been
entrenching herself. She sank down upon
a chair, stupefied, and listened to the step
that went echoing along the street. Was
he gone? Was he really gone? and for-
ever? Gone to Greenland in the *Pretty*
Peggy, into the ice where men and ships
perished, into the whaling boats where they
sank and were lost forever—should she
never see him more?

"You're made the bed, and you must lie
on it," said Mrs. Sinclair, when she heard
all, with an indignation that was soon lost
to sympathy. But Nora would not give
way either to the sympathy or the indignation.
She declared steadily that she would do the
same over again if it was in her power.

"What right had he to come making claims
and speaking of his rights to me?" she said.
"If a fellow follows a girl, does that give him
a right to her—whether or no? This was said
with burning eyes into which tears refused
to come. But yet Nora shed tears openly
over it. She took immense pains privately
to find out when the *Pretty Peggy* sailed,
and to know if she had shipped a doctor be-
fore she left Anster pier. Not for her life
would she have asked the doctor's name,
but she satisfied herself so far. And when
the fact could no longer be doubted, her
heart grew so sick that she could not go
home. The Sinclairs had friends "in Eng-
land"—a vague sort of expression used by
the untravelled Scotch then, as untravelled
islanders nowadays talk of "the Continent."
Nora persuaded her mother that it would be
pleasant to "go south," and pay the long-
promised visit. She was glad to go away,
glad to be anywhere out of the range of
those people and places with which Willy
Erskine's name was so closely connected.
But the other day it seemed he had been so
jubilant, so full of good prospects and high
hopes. Now he was out upon the Northern
seas, surgeon in a whaling-ship, like any
poor student or broken man. And he Drum-
thwaite's son! and whose fault was it that
Nora was ashamed to confront even the
familiar rocks that knew him so well—that
knew she had met him (by accident), and
strayed with him along the sea-verge, and
sailed spray now and then dashed into
their fresh faces, and the surge rushed to
their feet. She dragged her home-loving
mother about from one "connection" to

another all the summer through, enjoying
visits but little poor child. As for Mrs.
Sinclair, a British matron of the present day
would not be more disconsolate, nor feel
herself more alien in the heart of French
society, than was the Scottish gentlewoman
among her southern connections. Their
ways, their accent, their mode of living,
were all discordant to her. "If I were to
live all my life among those English," she
said, "I think I would rather die." Her
soul longed for the tents of Jacob and the
dwellings of Jerusalem. "But if I were
not to humor my own bairn," added Mrs.
Sinclair, with pathos, "who should humor
her?" Nora was her only child; somehow
or other she had made a mistake in her
young life. Clouds had come up over the
sun at the moment when that sun should
have been brightest. Her mother could
have given her the best of good advice, but
she chose to give her something better in
stead—she "humored" Nora. She was
her tender partisan, right or wrong. She
looked up her cause and supported her silently
against her own reproaches and all the
world. And that is the best way of healing
the wounds, if their friends but knew.

It was the end of summer before they
returned to the Gushat House. And then,
whether it was that they were unexpected,
or whether from her misdeeds, towards
Willy Erskine, as Nora thought, few people
came to see them at first, and nobody so
much as mentioned the Drumthwaite
family. The name of Erskine was never
as Nora thought, named before her; and
she felt herself more guilty still as she
seemed thus to read her own condemnation
in the eyes of others. But now the turn of
the season had arrived: when she cast wist-
ful looks from the corner of the garden up
the long country road, going "north," as
those geographical seafaring populations
described it, a leaf would now and then
flicker down through the sunny air, a sign
that autumn had come. A few weeks more,
and the *Pretty Peggy* might flutter up the
Firth with all her sails set, like a lady
coming into a ball room, as the sailors do
delighted to say; and if Nora, penitent,
with softness in her eyes, were by, could any
one doubt that the eager face of the ship's
doctor would expand too, and that the evil
days would come to an end? No one could
have doubted it but Nora. It was as cer-
tain that it would be made up as that the
Pretty Peggy would come safe out of the ice
seas. To be sure, ships were lost there
sometimes, sometimes detained among the
ice. But look what a season it has been!
Even the men's wives were easy in their
minds, and sung by their wheels, or mended
the nets at their cottage doors, and looked
over the smooth Firth with contented hearts.
A week or two more, and the season, with
their wages, and their curiosities, and their
rejoicing, would have come home.

There was not a man's wife in the *Pretty*
Peggy who was so anxious as Nora. But
that it was her fault. It was she who had
sent him to sea,—he who was no seaman,
he whom a wealthier lot awaited. And
perhaps he would look bitterly upon the
woman whose caprice had wrought him so
much harm. This was the thought that
made her heart ache, and made the day so
pier to watch the sunset reflections, and
listen in silence to the pattering of the
fishers and seamen about. When they
prospered a gale, Nora's heart would beat
wild with alarm; when they gave their word
the storm was past, a hush as of a consoled
child would come over her. At last there
came a speck on the horizon, upon which all
those ancient mariners fixed their telescopes.
They exchanged opinions about her rig, and
her hull, and her manner of sailing, till
Nora, standing by, was half crazed with
suspense. At last the news flew through
the town, waking up all the winds and cot-
tages. It was the *Pretty Peggy* at last.

It would be vain to describe the excite-
ment into which Nora, like many another
woman, rose at the news. The other women
were the sailors' wives, who had a right to
be moved. She had no such right. She
had never spoken even to her mother of the
Pretty Peggy. She had been too proud at
first to betray the smallest interest in the
movements of her lost lover; and she did
not ever know whether Mrs. Sinclair was
aware that Willy was coming with the re-
turning seamen out of the ice seas.

When the boat came back, and got within
hailing distance, the excitement grew terrible.
Some of the poor wives threw themselves
among the rocks to get the news a moment
earlier. Peter Roger stood on the highest
ledge, with his broad hand curved like a
trumpet round his eager ear. Nora placed
herself behind her nurse, instinctively, for
she loved the woman. But the awful
strain of all their ears and senses made the
first cry unintelligible to them. Twice the
vague shout came over the waters before it
could be comprehended. Then it was
caught up and echoed by a hundred voices.
"Only the doctor!" That was what they
said.

Only the doctor! There was a shout,
and then a cry, sharp with joy, from all those
women. Joy! though it was still death
that was coming. They clasped each other's
hands; they wept aloud; they cried out in
the relief of their deliverance. The whole
community, every living creature about,
began to breathe, and babble, and sob forth
thanksgiving. One figure alone fell forward
against the wall on which Nancy Morrison
had been leaning. Nora was stupefied. It
was like a great rock falling suddenly down
upon her out of the peaceful sky. She
struck, and gave one wail and shudder, and
then it came, crushing the heart and flesh.
The doctor! He had said true,—she was
never to see him more.

"Miss Nora, cheer up," said Nancy, cry-
ing and laughing, and shivering with joy.
"Dinna take it so sair to heart. It's her
nerves, my bonnie woman. But they're a
safe, noo, baith lads and men. It's but the
doctor,—do ye no hear what they say?"
Then Nora rose up desperate, and turned
her stony face upon them. "Do you think
there's none to break their hearts for him?"
She cried with a wild indignation. "Do
you think there's no mother, no woman
watching? Be silent, ye cruel women!
How dare you tell me it's only him?"
Then they all looked at her with pathetic
faces, gathering round her where she stood,
—she who did not know what she was say-
ing. Impatiently she turned from their
looks. What could sympathy, or anything
do for her? What did it matter? "Let
me be!" she cried, as Nancy had cried.
Let her alone! that was all she could say.
"En, Miss Nora, if we had knew the
doctor was anything to you!" cried one of
the pitiful women. Nora turned round with
a certain wild fierceness almost before the
words were said.

And who said he was anything to me?"
she asked with a strange scorn of herself
and them; he was nothing to her. She
could not even wear black for him, or let
anybody know she mourned. She shook
herself clear of the pining people she could
not help. Like a blind creature seeing
nothing, with an instinct only to get home
anyhow, she went straight forward, not
knowing where she placed her foot; and
then walked sightless, open-eyed, and mis-
erable—into Willy Erskine's arms.

The cry she uttered rang in the ears of
all the watching population for years after.
They forgot the ship and the men who were
so near at hand to gather round this curious
group. Nora fell forward into her lover's
arms like an inanimate thing. One shock
she had borne, and it had taken all her
strength—the other she could not bear.
For the first time in her life she lost con-
sciousness. The light had gone out of her
eyes before—now the very breath died on
her lips. Mrs. Sinclair, who had come down
to the pier with him to find her child, could
never be sufficiently thankful that Willy
was a doctor, and knew precisely what to do.

He carried his love all the way along the
pier, hampered by eager offers of help, and
still more anxious comments of sympathy,
for Nancy Morrison's cottage on the shore,
his heart full of remorse and exultation.
Though he had long ago forgotten his threat
about the *Pretty Peggy*, still it was quite true
that he had come, like a conspirator, to sur-
prise from Nora's honest eyes, from her
candid face, some revelation of her true feel-
ings. She had so revealed them now, as
that they never could be denied again; and
though it was not Willy's fault, he was re-
sponsible in his tenderness. He had never
set foot on the *Pretty Peggy*. He had
forgotten so entirely even the use he had
made of her name, that he believed, like
Mrs. Sinclair, that it was kindness to her
foster brother which had taken Nora to the
pier. Instead of an unprofitable visit to the
Greenland seas, he had been settling him-
self very advantageously in an inland town,
where his "connections," in the county
were sure to be of use to him; and after
this interval, with the mother's concurrence,
had come with sober determination not to be
discouraged, to know what Nora meant,
and what his fate was to be. All this Nora
learned afterwards by degrees with death
and happiness. The doctor who had died
was a dissipated old man, of a class too com-
mon in the Greenland ships. "I kept well
that dotted body could never be anything to
Miss Nora," cried Nancy Morrison, drying
her eyes. The mystery was cleared up in a
fashion to all the admiring and sympathetic
population round when Willy Erskine ap-
peared on the scene; and yet nobody knew
what it meant except Nora and he.

She was very angry and she was very
happy, as we have said. But she had taken
all power of resistance, had she wished to
resist, out of her own hands. And the story
came to the usual end of such stories, and
there is nothing more to say.

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could not even wear black for him, or let
anybody know she mourned. She shook
herself clear of the pining people she could
not help. Like a blind creature seeing
nothing, with an instinct only to get home
anyhow, she went straight forward, not
knowing where she placed her foot; and
then walked sightless, open-eyed, and mis-
erable—into Willy Erskine's arms.

The cry she uttered rang in the ears of
all the watching population for years after.
They forgot the ship and the men who were
so near at hand to gather round this curious
group. Nora fell forward into her lover's
arms like an inanimate thing. One shock
she had borne, and it had taken all her
strength—the other she could not bear.
For the first time in her life she lost con-
sciousness. The light had gone out of her
eyes before—now the very breath died on
her lips. Mrs. Sinclair, who had come down
to the pier with him to find her child, could
never be sufficiently thankful that Willy
was a doctor, and knew precisely what to do.

He carried his love all the way along the
pier, hampered by eager offers of help, and
still more anxious comments of sympathy,
for Nancy Morrison's cottage on the shore,
his heart full of remorse and exultation.
Though he had long ago forgotten his threat
about the *Pretty Peggy*, still it was quite true
that he had come, like a conspirator, to sur-
prise from Nora's honest eyes, from her
candid face, some revelation of her true feel-
ings. She had so revealed them now, as
that they never could be denied again; and
though it was not Willy's fault, he was re-
sponsible in his tenderness. He had never
set foot on the *Pretty Peggy*. He had
forgotten so entirely even the use he had
made of her name, that he believed, like
Mrs. Sinclair, that it was kindness to her
foster brother which had taken Nora to the
pier. Instead of an unprofitable visit to the
Greenland seas, he had been settling him-
self very advantageously in an inland town,
where his "connections," in the county
were sure to be of use to him; and after
this interval, with the mother's concurrence,
had come with sober determination not to be
discouraged, to know what Nora meant,
and what his fate was to be. All this Nora
learned afterwards by degrees with death
and happiness. The doctor who had died
was a dissipated old man, of a class too com-
mon in the Greenland ships. "I kept well
that dotted body could never be anything to
Miss Nora," cried Nancy Morrison, drying
her eyes. The mystery was cleared up in a
fashion to all the admiring and sympathetic
population round when Willy Erskine ap-
peared on the scene; and yet nobody knew
what it meant except Nora and he.

She was very angry and she was very
happy, as we have said. But she had taken
all power of resistance, had she wished to
resist, out of her own hands. And the story
came to the usual end of such stories, and
there is nothing more to say.

And who said he was anything to me?"
she asked with a strange scorn of herself
and them; he was nothing to her. She
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